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March 30, 2000 LB 803

SENATOR CUDABACK: Senator Schimek, to open on LB 803 as chairperson of the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee.

SENATOR SCHIMEK: Yes, thank you, Mr. President and members of the body. I intend to share my opening time with Senator Wickersham. This bill was really a joint project of the Government Committee and the Revenue Committees and, in fact, it was the Revenue Committee who originated the bill that put the issue on the ballot, in 1998, which the voters subsequently passed. This is enabling legislation that you have before you today, and it's about municipal counties or "blobs", as Senator Wickersham so inelegantly calls them. It's been a bill which has been two years in the making, and I will tell you right now that we are not going to take it to a vote today. However, I do hope that you will at least get a sense from our discussion today what the bill is about and know that we will be back next fall or next January with a similar kind of bill. One of the reasons we want to discuss this today, one of the reasons I asked the Government Committee to put it out on the floor was I want all those cities and counties out there to see what the combined product looks like so that then they can come to us during the interim with their suggestions and ideas. This is a complicated process, and it deserves a lot of study and work. So having said that, the Government Committee did have a hearing on March 18, 1999. We got some input, but not a huge amount of input. The League came in, the League of Municipalities, Nebraska Commission on Local Government Restructuring and Innovation, the League of Women Voters, and the city of Columbus. But I don't think we really got the in-depth kind of input that we probably would still like to have. The bill itself provides that one or more counties and at least one of the municipalities in each county may create a municipal county or blob to carry out all county services and all municipal services. The municipal county is created by, originally in the bill, by the passage of a joint resolution by the counties and municipalities involved in placing the issue on the ballot. The municipal county would have a council of between five to nine members at least half of whom will be elected by district and there would be an elective executive or mayor. The municipal county has the ability to levy and that's I think where it gets the most complicated, and I'm glad the Revenue Committee is